

Children's homes inspection - Full

Inspection date	09/10/2015
Unique reference number	SC476326
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home
Registered person	Cambian Childcare Limited
Registered person address	Pinnacle House 2 Oakwood Square, Cheadle Royal Business Park CHEADLE Cheshire SK8 3SB
Responsible individual	Samantha Millward
Registered manager	Post vacant
Inspector	Rachel Britten

Inspection date	09/10/2015
Previous inspection judgement	sustained effectiveness
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	Requires improvement
The children's home is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.	
how well children and young people are helped and protected	Requires improvement
the impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement

SC476326

Summary of findings

The children's home provision requires improvement because:

- Children and young people's progress has slowed because of drift in the planning and delivery of care.
- Gaps in the therapeutic service adversely hold back children's engagement in therapy and recovery from trauma.
- The organisation does not clearly or routinely set out its reasons for recruiting staff when concerns arise during the vetting process.
- Sanctions, consequences and physical interventions are not properly evaluated to see if they work.
- Staff have not received regular, effective support and supervision. They have become worn down and their safeguarding practice has lapsed on a few occasions.
- The registered manager did not review and evaluate plans, records and care practice with skill or insight to drive forward good quality care.
- Monthly independent visitor reports have not been acted upon, or sent to Ofsted, in a timely way.

The children's home strengths

- The home and records are much better organised since the new manager came in August 2015.
- Children and young people are in good routines and staff consistently maintain a warm, positive atmosphere.
- Some children are engaging and progressing well in therapy, life story, and education.
- Children who move into and out of the home receive well thought out continuing input from key care staff that they know well.
- Some placing social workers and independent reviewing officers are pleased with the quality of communication from the home and are confident that their children's needs are being met well.
- Staff feel better supported and supervised since the new manager came.
- The organisation has improved its processes for staff recruitment, induction and work with the home's monthly visitors since August.

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
14. The care planning standard In order to meet the care planning standard, with particular respect to continuously ensuring the appropriateness of placements, the registered person must ensure— (2)(b) that arrangements are in place to— (ii) manage and review the placement of each child in the home; and (iii) plan for, and help, each child to prepare to leave the home or to move into adult care in a way that is consistent with arrangements agreed with the child's placing authority; (c) that each child's relevant plans are followed; (e) that the child's placing authority is contacted, and a review of that child's relevant plans is requested, if— (i) the registered person considers that the child is at risk of harm or has concerns that the care provided for the child is inadequate to meet the child's needs.	25/11/2015
The registered person must ensure that within 24 hours of the use of a measure of control, discipline or restraint in relation to a child in the home, a record is made which includes the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. (Regulation 35 (3)(a)(vii))	25/11/2015
The independent person must provide a copy of the independent person's report to HMCI (Regulation 44 (7))	25/11/2015
5. Engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met. In order to meet the engaging with the wider system standard,	25/11/2015

with particular respect to consultation, care planning, and provision of therapy, the registered person must, and must ensure that staff— (a) seek to involve each child’s placing authority effectively in the child’s care, in accordance with the child’s relevant plans; (b) seek to secure the input and services required to meet each child’s needs; (c) if the registered person considers, or staff consider, a placing authority’s or a relevant person’s performance or response to be inadequate in relation to their role, challenge the placing authority or the relevant person to seek to ensure that each child’s needs are met in accordance with the child’s relevant plans; and (d) seek to develop and maintain effective professional relationships with such persons, bodies or organisations as the registered person considers appropriate having regard to the range of needs of children for whom it is intended that the children’s home is to provide care and accommodation.	
12. The protection of children standard In order to meet the protection of children standard, with particular regard to accurate, individualised risk assessments and relevant plans for going missing and internet safety, the registered person must ensure— 2 (b) that the home’s day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm.	25/11/15

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

- Ensure that the registered person only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child’s assessed needs as recorded in the child’s relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 56, paragraph 11.4)
- Ensure that, as set out in regulations 31-33, the registered person takes responsibility for maintaining good employment practice. They must ensure that recruitment, supervision and performance management of staff safeguards children and minimises potential risks to them. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.1)

- Ensure that the registered person has systems in place so that all staff, including the manager, receive supervision of their practice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional, which allows them to reflect on their practice and the needs of the children assigned to their care. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 61, paragraph 13.2)
- Ensure that the registered person supports staff to be ambitious for every child in the home and to gain skills and experience that enable them to actively support each child to achieve their potential. To ensure that staff understand and can meet each child's needs, in line with their responsibilities, the registered person themselves will need to have a high level of understanding of the needs of the children in their care. (The Guide to the Quality Standards page 52, paragraph 10.5)10.5)
- Ensure that the registered person actively seeks independent scrutiny of the home and makes best use of information from independent and internal monitoring (including under regulations 44 and 45) to ensure continuous improvement. They should be skilled in anticipating difficulties and reviewing incidents, such as learning from disruptions and placement breakdowns. They are responsible for proactively implementing lessons learned and sustaining good practice. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 55, paragraph 10.24)

Full report

Information about this children's home

This private company children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
05/03/2015	CH - Interim	Sustained effectiveness
30/09/2014	CH - Full	Good
19/02/2014	CH – Re-registration	Not applicable

Inspection Judgements

	Judgement grade
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people living in the home	requires improvement
Children and young people's progress has slowed over 2015 because of changes in the staff group and drift in the delivery of care and therapy. Some children and young people are not so well engaged in life story and regular therapy. This is because changes in the staff, locations and methods they use, have unsettled them. The reduced availability and effectiveness of therapy has stalled some children's emotional and psychological health, and their progress towards foster care or independent living. Despite this, new therapists and life story workers are creative in their approaches and are developing trusting relationships with children. Other children have remained well engaged throughout the year, and have benefitted from their therapy and life story work. Children and young people living here during the period since the last inspection were not all well matched. Difficult behaviour over six months had a negative impact on the experiences of the group of children. Long standing staff continued to maintain good quality relationships with children, but a number of staff left and temporary replacements reduced the quality of relationships that children enjoyed. During this period, staff worked extra hours and were stretched. They spent less quality time planning and providing good times with children and young people. They stopped helping them keep memorabilia of their time here. Nevertheless, children who moved into the home since the last inspection experienced good continuity and settled in quickly because their key carer from the previous home moved onto the staff team here. The home's monthly visitor said in August: 'All the young people appeared happy and relaxed in the company of their carers.' Children and young people's plans and preparations for their futures have not all been best managed. Some independent reviewing officers say there have been planning delays for which the placing authority are responsible. Some placing authorities have commissioned independent assessments of children and young people's needs due to questions about the real progress some children and young people make. Some have been told they will be moving on and then this has not happened. Others face uncertainty about their next move. Some have moved on, and there are plans for others to move to different placements. Staff and the registered person have cooperated with placing authorities throughout, but have not made a clear enough contribution to planning based upon their own detailed knowledge and understanding of children and young people's needs. The planning and management of children and young people's transitions require improvement. Experienced staff in the home and the registered manager have not	

used and shared what they know about individual children's progress and experiences very effectively with placing authorities. As a result, some children's next placements have not been successful. Nevertheless, staff do plan carefully when and how children are informed about their moves. They tailor the pace of introductions and plan the details of goodbyes to meet children's individual needs. Key staff also visit and phone children after they have moved. This is a genuine demonstration of staff's care and commitment to them.

The quality of children and young people's experiences is good overall. They say they like being here. Children and young people are in good routines and there is a warm, positive atmosphere. Staff know that the present group of four children and young people are able to live together and make progress in accordance with their placement plans. Staff diligently plan each day to meet every child's needs, making it clear to each, who is going to be with them and who is going to help them settle to bed. Most children know how long they are here for and what their longer term plans are. They are enjoying and participating in community clubs and sports, like football, fishing and horse riding. They are doing well with taking care of their personal hygiene and contributing to cooking and keeping the house clean. They get on with their homework straight after school, with staff help. They enjoy playing board and electronic games and with toy cars.

The deputy manager says staff no longer feel that they are 'slap bang in problems' with staffing sufficiency, therapy changes, and a difficult mix of children who picked on one another. Staff are now working more creatively with children and young people again. For example, they are playing games and spending more quality time with children. They are helping them develop good coping strategies. They put together 'feelings boxes' to help children calm by playing with various textured objects of their choice. A child who is no longer breaking all the things in his bedroom said proudly, 'I'm doing well with my room aren't I.' Staff are developing older young people's cooking skills and are taking them to the gym. A social worker said, 'I thank them for continuing to develop my young person's engagement and concentration levels.'

	Judgement grade
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement
Various isolated, but serious incidents have taken place over the last six months, involving a number of children and young people. These have been adequately managed and safeguarding procedures have been followed. For example, poor supervision of children whilst using the internet and lack of understanding about the inbuilt safeguards on the home's equipment, enabled an incident of	

downloading unsuitable sexual material to take place. Safeguarding procedures were followed as soon as the incident happened and there has not been a re-occurrence. One young person refused to return to the home at the end of free time after school. The young person's whereabouts were unknown for a few hours, during which a peer alleged that she had been threatened by the young person. The consequences used by the manager and staff to deal with the behaviour were unimaginative and unhelpful. An allegation against a member of staff following a restraint was investigated according to safeguarding procedures and was found to be unsubstantiated. This was appropriate safeguarding practice. Children, young people, and the member of staff were appropriately safeguarded during the period of the investigation. Some incidents of sexualised, bullying behaviour have been quickly noted, averted and re-occurrence prevented through staff vigilance and improved supervision.

The plans staff make and use to manage and prevent unsafe behaviour are not accurate, helpful or up-to-date in many instances. Plans designed to assist staff if children go missing contain irrelevant, wrong or contradictory information. Plans have not been composed thoughtfully, kept under review, or carefully read. They are not adapted in the light of incidents. Behaviour management plans, risk assessments and care plans are not helpful to staff or children. Debriefs, reviews and analysis of incidents are not thorough enough to really inform practice. Measures of control, including physical interventions, are not reviewed properly afterwards to see if they work. Records are not detailed or insightful enough about the practices used by staff. As a result, staff are not clear enough about how to prevent serious situations reoccurring or how to promote improvement in children and young people's behaviour.

Despite poor written plans, staff usually practice in a way that contributes to a feeling of well-being and security for children and young people. In particular, staff understand that children and young people's vulnerability to abuse and bullying result from the impact of their past experiences. Staff usually provide close supervision and regular guidance to children and young people. They ensure that free time and unsupervised time with friends and at clubs take place only when children and young people are able to behave safely. They provide some helpful teaching about safe touch, sex and relationships. This helps children and young people manage their friendships and social time. Staff remind children and young people about appropriate behaviour and they are usually caring, fair and consistent. This support and care has helped some children and young people to become increasingly safe. However, new and temporary staff, who do not know the children well, have not had clear behaviour and safeguarding plans to follow. There have therefore been lapses in the quality of practice that compromised the quality of their help and protection to children and young people.

Staff are vetted through the organisation's human resources department. Checks,

such as references and police checks, are always undertaken to help ensure that staff are deemed safe to care for children. However, the registered person does not make records of how decisions to appoint have been reached and why any concerns are being set aside. This is not robust recruitment practice.

	Judgement grade
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Inadequate
The registered manager who was in post until August 2015, did not effectively prioritise the needs of children and young people. He was neither proactive nor well organised. He took a number of months to respond to the shortfalls in record keeping and support to staff highlighted by the home's monthly visitor. Many of the recommendations of the previous Ofsted inspection were not acted upon. For example, the home has not improved its contribution to care planning for children; effective consultation with stakeholders has not taken place; and staff have not received regular, effective support, supervision and appraisal. The care and therapy described in the home's statement of purpose has not been delivered to a standard that produces good outcomes for children and young people. Social workers say, 'goalposts shifted', and: 'there is a lack of prior consultation. The model of care changed and there was change in therapeutic workers'. Children and young people have not all made good progress since the last inspection. The registered manager said at the end of one young person's placement that: 'it had become apparent that she was not making progress against plans'. The manager did not proactively oversee the child's relevant plans throughout the placement. He did not creatively or insightfully lead and support staff in their practice with the young person. The registered person has not provided the right supportive environment for staff, through effective supervision, appraisal, training and induction that is tailored to the specific needs of the children and young people. Staff became worn down and lost some confidence in the registered manager. Three staff left and cover was provided by staff who moved here with their child or worked here while awaiting the registration of other homes. The deputy manager said that she and the registered manager did not know how to organise staff induction, or use the new in-service training programme offered by the organisation. She said: 'There were massive communication breakdowns. The organisation were holding interviews every Friday – we had people starting who were clearly not suitable.' It is only in	

the last few months that home managers have had more involvement in recruitment of home staff to ensure they can meet the specific needs of these children and young people. They are now accessing an improved induction and training package to train them for meeting the specific needs of the children and young people in the home. The registered manager moved to another home in August 2015 by agreement with the organisation because he wanted to work with older teenagers. Since the new manager came, regular support and supervision is provided to staff which they find supportive and helpful.

The previous manager did not take decisive and effective action when weaknesses in the home were identified by the home's visitor or the regulator, Ofsted. His own monitoring of the home during the year lacked analysis, skill or a drive to improve. He acknowledged the stress of staff shortages, but did not support them well enough or drive effective recruitment. He was unaware that the monthly visitor's reports had not been sent to the regulator, Ofsted for four months. He did not send his own periodic review reports to Ofsted in a timely way. This prevented the regulator from seeing the extent of the visitor's concerns and the real difficulties in the home. The monthly visitor identified 'drift' in responding to issues such as: out-of-date plans; incomplete records of measures of control, and numerous medication errors. Recent improvements in these areas are attributed to the organisational skills of the new manager.

The experienced new manager has been in post since August 2015 and has applied to Ofsted for registration. She has qualifications to NVQ level 4 in care and management. She has significantly improved the organisation of all the home and children's records. She has implemented weekly staff meetings and is present in the home for early morning shift handovers. The monthly visitor said in August: 'There is significant improvement to the systems and processes at the home over a very short period of time and this can be evidenced in major improvements to record keeping, management systems and files, the general reorganisation and improvement to the office space. She has a clear vision of the way forward and is already starting to provide clear leadership to the staff team.' Staff and the deputy manager feel 'buoyant' that: 'staff support and induction are on a different level now.' Children and young people are progressing and beginning to engage again, both in therapy and in the life of the home. The new manager is prioritising making relationships with placing authorities and improving the home's contribution to care planning.

What the inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

An **outstanding** children's home provides highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** children's home provides effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a children's home that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the children's home is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children and young people.

A children's home that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children and young people being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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